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The Black Cat

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Ten Cents

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SAPOLIO
IN THE KITCHEN
HAND SAPOLIO
IN THE BOUDOIR

She let her right hand know what her left hand did, and found that **HAND SAPOLIO** is as necessary an adjunct to the toilet as **SAPOLIO** is to housework.

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Smedley's Stepping-Stone to Matrimony.*

BY FRANK M. BICKNELL.

ST. PAUL & NEW ORLEANS TRANSPORTATION was off another point, having closed at 21¼ asked.

When I take up my morning paper I almost always open it first to the financial page. I do this not because I have money to invest or speculate with, but for the perhaps not wholly insufficient reason that I enjoy reckoning up the imaginary fortunes I might have made had I been able to lay the requisite stake, yesterday or last week or a month ago, on the lucky number. I suppose I am like the penniless boy who flattens his nose against the candy-shop window and tantalizes himself with the rich show of goodies he might revel in had he but the "price."

A young man friend of mine, employed in a broker's office, had assured me that St. P. & N. O. was a good thing. This despite the fact of its having dropped so steadily for the last three weeks that it could not go much farther before striking bottom with a dull thud. He didn't fully understand the causes of the decline — he hinted mysteriously at manipulations by the "Harryhill crowd" — but he insisted vehemently that the stock had a future. Well, if the said future was to be a happy one, if destiny held a sweet by-and-by for St. P. &

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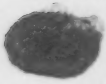
N. O., circumstances would prevent me from doing more than "see it afar." Still, I could follow its fluctuations with interest and without expense.

I was in process of restoring the pages of the paper to their proper numerical order when something caught my attention which effectually diverted it from St. P. & N. O. for that day and during many days afterward. This was a notice, prominently displayed among the advertising columns, and couched in these words:



"Mr. Alan Kneggie announces that he will bestow one million dollars in cash upon a poor and worthy person, to be chosen by himself, who shall be able to fill one simple condition. Apply in writing, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope for reply, and, as a guarantee of good faith, a one-dollar bill (which will be returned later). Candidates to be eligible must apply within one week from to-day; no letters postmarked after the end of that time will be considered. Address, Alan Kneggie, P. O. Box 04197Q, New York. Positively no personal applications can be entertained: Mr. Kneggie is out of town and will remain away till after the award."

As I stared at this extraordinary proclamation I was almost inclined to doubt my own eyes. I read it again, and then a third time. A million dollars given away! What did it mean? Was it a hoax? But who would dare take such a liberty with the well-known name of Alan Kneggie? The eccentric multimillionaire and philanthropist was throwing his money about so freely and had done so many strange things with it, perhaps this was hardly more amazing than some of his other acts. The offer might be genuine after all. But what about that "simple condition"? There, probably, lay the cat in the meal. If Mr. Kneggie were to stipulate that the recipient of his million must be able to amass another million unaided within a month, though such a condition might appear simple to him, it certainly would prove too difficult for most poor and worthy persons — myself among the number.

Yet I had a mind to put in an application, for at times I felt as if the world ought to afford me a little more pleasure than that of ending my days in an attic — and a back attic at that. My income was severely limited, but by enduring Mother Grimaud's Third Avenue twenty-five-cent table d'hote dinner for a week I should have a spare dollar, and I could not do more than lose it. My resolve solidified at once. The composition of my letter cost me some pains, but in the end I believed

I had succeeded in giving an idea of my poverty and worthiness that ought to appeal to Mr. Kneggie and touch his heart with a Midas touch. I posted my application before noon; and by the last delivery next day my self-addressed envelope came back to me. I opened it with unsteady fingers and pulled out — a one-dollar bill, apparently the same I had sent. Accompanying it was a note in a hasty, not wholly unfamiliar scrawl, running thus:

"DEAR OLD BOY: —

Awfully glad to hear from you. Thought sure you must have taken to shoving clouds by now, had not heard news of you for so long. Come up and see me at 97 West 54th, and we'll talk over ancient history. If you like perhaps I can put you next something good temporarily. Come as soon as convenient after receipt of this. Come this evening, can't you? Come now, *come!*

"In haste,

"S. A. SMEDLEY."

At sight of Smedley's signature I saw also my chances of gathering in that million dollars melting into hazy nothingness. I had known Sintram A. Smedley (he never would tell what name his middle initial stood for) "off and on" since we were boys together in a Boston department store, and he certainly was, by a long lead, the oddest genius I ever met. He seemed to exist for no other purpose than to radiate good-humor, shirk his legitimate work, and originate brilliant schemes — which, in those earlier days, he seldom carried out. He had more new ideas in a day than visit some men in a year. He simply sweated schemes, perspired plans, and threw off notions, conceits and suggestions with the dazzling effect of a catherine-wheel. Almost any one of Smedley's projects, if perfected, patented and promoted, would have meant a modest fortune for somebody, yet he did next to nothing with them. He would toss out a suggestion as carelessly as an after-dinner speaker might emit an epigram, a dilettante poet recite a quatrain, or an amateur archer shoot an aimless arrow into air. What became of it he cared not, it meant nothing more to him.

It was Smedley who proposed, among countless other devices, the matinee cane for men of moderate means, which, transformed into a three-legged stool, could be used by "standees" at the theatre; it was he who proposed the portable inflatable cushion for lecture-rooms, park benches, etc.; the "donkey-power" inclined, dwelling-house elevator for dowagers

and others weighted by flesh or years, as an easy method of getting up-stairs; the spring brake for street-cars, by which the energy wasted in stopping could be stored and used for starting again; the phonograph train and station announcer; and the — but I cannot recall, nor have I space to enumerate a tenth of the merely mechanical devices which Smedley might have given to the world had he chosen to follow up his ideas. It was mainly for his original and daring ventures in financial gymnastics that he deserves fame — or its opposite. To my thinking, some of his schemes of this sort must have belonged, from a legal point of view, in the extra-hazardous class, though I had not heard of his ever coming into conflict with the law.

For at least six years, though I had heard from him indirectly more than once, I had not laid eyes on Smedley; and I must say that, thoroughly cognizant of him and his capabilities as I used to be, the manner of his sudden reappearance within my ken gave me a sensible jar. In fact, daring as I knew him to be, this latest proof of sublime impudence quite took away my breath. It would have seemed as if not even Sintram A. Smedley could be bold enough to seize upon the name of the great Alan Kneggie to use in bolstering up one of his questionable schemes.

In spite of the disappointing collapse of my million-dollar bubble dream I was heartily glad of the chance to renew my acquaintance with Smedley. He occupied rooms on the second floor of 97 West 54th Street, and I was shown up to the front one when I called at eight o'clock that evening. Smedley himself unlocked the door and dragged me in, almost literally embracing me as he did so.

"My dear fellow, I'm delighted to see you," he exclaimed, "delighted, delighted beyond measure!"

He was without either coat, waistcoat or collar, and seemed to have been hard at work just before my arrival. As he relocked the door and drew me farther into the room, and, after repeated hand-shakings, pushed me into the only unoccupied chair, I saw what he had been doing. Two large tables, placed side by side between the windows, were covered, yes, heaped, piled high with letters, opened and unopened, while the top of a

third smaller table was entirely hidden beneath what appeared to be — and in fact were — hundreds and hundreds of one-dollar bills.

"In the name of the prophet!" I cried, "or in the name of profit and loss, perhaps I should say, what are you going to do with all that money?"

"Eventually I am going to send it back to the — er — the contributors," he answered, with one of his old familiar white-toothed smiles — smiles that seldom failed to win him friends at sight.

"What!" I cried, frankly incredulous, as who would not have been?

"Sure thing!" he declared, as he shoved aside some of the letters so as to seat himself on a corner of one of the tables, "didn't you read the ad.? — 'dollar bill — guarantee good faith — returned later.' Didn't you get back yours?"

"Yes, I did," I replied, in an injured tone, "and I can't understand why you should have thrown me down like — like any stranger."

"Solely because you're not eligible, you don't fill the bill."

"But I might do something to qualify — "

"My dear fellow," he sought to explain, "it is not a question of doing, but of being. You don't happen to *be*, that's all. You don't satisfy the condition."

"What is your condition, your simple condition?" I asked, still unappeased.

"That must remain a secret for the present, and you'll have to rest content with my assurance that you don't answer requirements," he said, patiently.

"Oh, very well," I said, rather huffily. "Perhaps you will tell me this: What has Alan Kneggie to do with the business?"

Smedley grinned — one of those captivating grins that made you love him, and replied, "He lends it the weight of his name."

"Without his knowledge or consent, perhaps," I suggested, smiling in spite of myself at his brazen audacity.

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies," he retorted, grinning more widely than before. "But I will say this much: I once did Mr. Kneggie an important service, nothing less than

saving his precious life. He was in a boat that capsized. He can't swim a stroke. I was in another boat that didn't capsize, and I can swim. I jumped into the water and pulled him out of it. Naturally he was grateful. He is now off on a month's vacation to try to get a thorough rest — no one but himself knows where, quite beyond the reach of mail, telegraph or yellow journalists, and in strict incognito. While he isn't using his name himself I have borrowed it, see? Now let's say no more about that. The main point is, would you like to help me — for a consideration? The work will be hard, but the pay will be good. I expect strenuous times for the next week or ten days. This being private secretary pro tem for a bloated billionaire may be a cinch, but it's no sinecure. I need a confidential assistant whom I can trust to count uncounted thousands, and I'd rather have you than any other man living. Do you see this pile of stuff? My mail is going to be big. I had to get a carriage to bring it up from the post-office to-day, and I shall probably have to hire a furniture van to-morrow. I have advertised in the leading dailies of a dozen large cities, and the harvest promises to be something enormous, colossal, overwhelming. Will you pull off your coat, roll up your sleeves and duff in to help garner it?"

"Smedley," I returned, in my most serious tone and with a face to match, "do you actually mean what you told me about returning this money?"

"On my sacred honor," he asserted earnestly, "every last dollar of it is going back to where it came from — I swear it!"

"Very well, then," I said; "I don't understand your machinations even a little bit, but you've doped my conscience so I'll rely on your promise and lend a hand for what I'm worth."

During the next fortnight I worked harder than I ever did before or have done since. Smedley's mail, pouring in from all parts of the country, must have amounted to tons, and the money enclosed — I had no chance of reckoning it in the aggregate, but I am sure there could not have been less than five hundred thousand dollars. He took charge of the cash — deposited it in the Day and Night Bank, I think — and he and I together did all we could of the other necessary work. We put

the stamped envelopes into large trunks — to be taken out later for the return of the money if his persistent reassurance was to be believed — and we stacked up the letters in one of the rear rooms for burning or other convenient destruction at some future time. We were obliged to work all day and often a good part of the night; and soon Smedley had to hire outside help — unskilled labor, he called it — for some of the less confidential drudgery.

"Smedley," I said once, in a rare moment of merely moderate activity, "I used to think you would marry Miss — Miss — I've forgotten her name, if I ever heard it, but I mean that sumptuous blonde who was cloak model at Snuydekooper's."

"Confidentially, my boy, so did I," he returned, his habitual cheerfulness seeming to undergo transitory eclipse. "We'd fixed it up, and the day was set — though the invitations weren't out — when I lost most of what I had made from the sale of the Pink & Purple proposition in an unlucky plunge. You remember the Pink & Purple Trading Stamp Company, I infer."

"I should think so — who doesn't? I have a prospectus at home now. 'The Pink and Purple is the People's Popular Stamp. Ask for the Pure, Properly-gummed, Perfected, Microbe-proof Pink and Purple Trading Stamp. Secure the Stamp that Sticks. There's plenty of Gum on the Pink and Purple Trading Stamp and it has been Sterilized.' Oh, I remember it all right, and I had always regarded it as your magnum opus."

"Well," admitted Smedley, with becoming modesty, "The conception of the scheme and the selling of it to the competitor who couldn't down it by trying to buck against it, certainly did put S. A. Smedley some dollars to the good. And I needed that money," he went on rather pensively. "As you must have seen, that beauteous blonde isn't the sort of ingenuous young thing who can be courted efficaciously with kisses and caramels alone, or with a walk up Fifth Avenue of a Sunday and an occasional gallery seat at the Union Square. No, sir, I knew I must make up my mind to go on breaking double X's into flinders, let them fly where they would, if I hoped to cut any ice with her. And if it cost money to court her it would cost heaps more to marry her. When I lost my all in the unfortunate speculation I men-

tioned, she prudently said, 'Nay, nay, Pauline, not this week.' I tell you that girl has got an A1 business head on her — as good as you'll find in this burg or any other."

His white teeth were gleaming again from beneath his mustache, his tone had become warmly admiring, and his usual cheerfulness seemed to be quite restored.

"No love in a cottage for her, no bread and cheese and kisses and repentance after it's too late," he went on gaily; "you've got to be there with the goods every time, or it's no deal. She says when birdie can show available assets in six figures dovey will flutter down into the nest and leave her happy home for he — that is, if I can get any kind of a half-way hustle on she won't cancel my option just yet. Meanwhile she is foreign buyer for Madame Stephanie, Robes et Manteaux, and is laying by a little pin-money of her own. Oh, she's the only girl in the world for me, and that wedding is due to happen all right, you can risk a stack of blues on that — if only I can pull this present coup of mine off successfully."

"That's good," said I, with proper enthusiasm; then, seizing what I hoped was a favorable opportunity, I asked: "By the way, Smedley, just what is this game of yours? You haven't told me, you know."

He smiled sardonically, chuckled as over some huge joke, looked wise, looked mysterious, then slowly shook his head. "It was not an inadvertent omission, dear boy," he finally answered.

"But — but is it strictly on the level?" I persisted, feeling my conscience beginning to murmur in its sleep.

"My dear fellow," he replied, with a shrug and a grimace, "as you doubtless have surmised, the problem I early set myself was, not to see how good and pious I could be on a small income, but to discover how large an income I could acquire without being too unspeakably wicked. As I expect to have a long time to be dead in, I mean to get all the fun that's coming to me while I'm alive. The deal I'm engaged in now is square enough, but to disclose its nature would be to imperil its success, see?"

And not another hint of what he was up to could I get him to vouchsafe.

The inflow of letters, each enclosing its dollar, continued, as might have been expected, for some days after the advertised time-limit had expired, but at the end of a fortnight the flood began to abate till it had become comparatively a mild dribble. Two days later — I think it was — Smedley, whose always superabundant cheerfulness had now overpassed all former bounds, came into our "office" early in the forenoon, bringing a large rectangular packet, and followed by an "unskilled laborer," who was carrying a still larger one.

"Now," he said, when his assistant had set down his burden and gone, "we'll proceed to throw in the reversing gear and begin to back water."

The small packet proved to contain brand-new one-dollar bills, thousands of them, the larger held an immense number of note-sheets on each of which was printed this communication:

> "In fulfilment of his promise, Mr. Alan Kneggie is returning, herewith enclosed, the dollar you lately sent him; and at the same time he begs to express his sincere regret that you should not have proved eligible for his gift, the award of which has now been made to the only person who meets exactly the particular condition he had in mind.
>
> "Mr. Kneggie is sorry he is unable to bestow upon each of the many hundred thousands of applicants an independent fortune, but wishes it distinctly understood that he cannot enter into any further correspondence regarding the award."

"One of these billets-doux and a dollar into each of our dear friends' stamped envelopes, and then it'll be up to Uncle Sam's P. O.," Smedley explained briskly, and straightway set me an example by falling to work.

An amazing man was S. A. Smedley. I am sure his like never existed. I knew he had pledged his "sacred honor" to return that money, and I didn't see how even he could fail to keep such a pledge, yet when I realized that he was going to send to every single one of those deluded people — they numbered more than half a million — the dollar from which he or she had been so easily separated, I must admit that it pretty nearly "flabbergasted" me. In my inmost heart I hadn't really believed he would do it.

We were at it a long time — we worked only by daylight now — and we used up a good many more than the original supply of circulars, not to mention dollar bills fresh from the Sub-Treasury, but at last the task was completed. Then Smedley drew to my order a check the size of which took my

breath away, and remarked, with a sigh of deep satisfaction:

"There! now I'm like that blacksmith fellow in the reading-book, and owe no man anything."

"It seems to me," I suggested, when I had thanked him for his liberality, "that at least you owe me some sort of an explanation. Of all the mysterious, puzzling, baffling, wholly inexplicable pieces of business I ever was mixed up with this certainly carries off the prize. Will you tell me why you gathered in all that money and then refunded it again?"

"Gladly, dear boy, most gladly," he assented, smiling one of his singularly engaging smiles; "I feel that an explanation is due you, and due right off now. Are you, by chance, at all interested in the eccentricities of the stock market?"

I started, as the vague, uncertain flicker of an idea seemed struggling to illumine my befogged brain. "I have sometimes felt a sort of — er — platonic interest in that quarter," I confessed, "though I have been much too busy lately to give anything of that kind a thought."

"Well, I haven't; I've been giving a good deal of the very best thought I could dredge up out of my noddle to the doings of a certain specific stock, to wit, namely: St. Paul & New Orleans Transportation Company. Ever hear of it before?"

"Certainly, often."

"I've been taking a little flier in it. I had what proved to be a safe tip on St. P. & N. O. Trans. The — hem — temporary loans of our good friends about the country totalled to something between five and six hundred thousand dollars. There was a lot of St. P. & N. O. in the market three weeks ago — and is now, since day before yesterday. I worked very quietly and cautiously, through a score or so of brokers, and with my borrowed funds I succeeded in margining a hundred and several odd thousand shares of St. P. & N. O. Trans. at slightly under 19. Shortly afterward I rather think —" Smedley stopped a moment to indulge in a gleefully wicked chuckle — "I rather think a rumor got started somehow that Alan Kneggie was taking up St. P. & N. O. Trans. and intended to do big things with it. At any rate, in the course of the following week there began to be something doing in it. It took several high jumps,

then it arose and soared aloft and went up some more. Once it touched 38. Before the end of the boom I had closed my connection with it, unloading at about 35, and thereby clearing more than a million and a half. So that, after paying off the loan and meeting all other expenses, I find myself a million ahead of the game. Now will you be best man at my wedding to the lovely blonde?"

"With the greatest pleasure in life," I responded. "But, Smedley," I queried, struck by an afterthought, "suppose that stock had happened to go down instead of up, and you had lost your money — your friends' money — ?"

"Why consider such a very unpleasant hypothesis?" he demanded, with a shrug. "However, in that now impossible case I greatly fear little S. A. S. would have been reluctantly obliged to do the vanishing act."

"Well, and another thing: what do you expect Mr. Kneggie will say when he learns how you have been making free with his name and reputation?"

"I'm no seventh son of a seventh son to be gifted with second sight," he replied easily, "though I might venture to prophesy that the old boy will be mad enough to take Mark Twain's advice and swear. But I saved his life, he mustn't forget that," continued the scamp, with a comical assumption of virtue. "But for S. A. Smedley there'd be no Alan Kneggie in this beautiful world now, and I'll tell him so unless he swallows his wrath and forgives me."

"One more question: how about that 'simple condition' you paraded in your unblushing advertisement — wasn't that rather — er — rather — ?"

"My boy," Smedley broke in emphatically, "that condition embodied the crux of the whole thing, it touched the vital point. It was that the poor and worthy person eligible to receive the million dollars must have been christened 'Sintram Ananias Smedley,' and, curiously enough, I was the sole applicant of 'em all who had been — so I collared the million, see?"

The Man with the Smile.*

BY B. BRACE.

THE man at the saw solicitously passed a hand, coarse-fingered and torn-nailed, along the sharply ground edge, satisfied himself slowly that all was well, and looked up at his leisure. "What can you do around a mill?" he jeered.

The stranger threw back his shoulders. "I'll do anything," he answered quickly. "I'm an engineer by trade, but if there's no chance at that, I can make bolts, or fall trees, or haul logs. I'll do anything."

The man at the saw looked him over with the contempt of an animal for a weaker one of its kind.

"You're too much of a two-by-four to be good at the heavy work," he mocked, with a shameless smile at his own pleasantry. "And the Boss don't need any more men, nohow."

The fever of hope burned out in the questioner's face. It was a thin, dark, well-featured face, with a smile as its unforgetable attribute, — an anxious, cynical smile that twisted one corner of the sensitive mouth, and gave the face a curiously tortured expression. As he turned away he stumbled over a rope line, and a great burst of laughter from the mill men followed his awkward attempt to regain his balance.

But the man with the smile pulled himself slowly over the narrow plank walk without seeming to hear. Opposite the cook-house he stopped dizzily. The hot, unsavory smell of food floated out, and mingled evilly with the wholesome odor of the newly cut lumber. The man put out a hand and caught at the air. Then uncertainly he dragged himself to the cook-house door.

A fat man with an ill-natured, puffy face and a cook's apron was rolling out sand-colored pastry at the table. He glanced up and waited for the intruder to speak.

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"Well, damn ye, what is it?" he burst out at length.

A flush flamed up under the dark pallor of the face. The curious smile became a grimace.

"Will you — give me something to eat?" he quivered out. "I have no money to pay you."

The cook trimmed the edges of the pie crust, and poured in a filling of peaches from a huge tin can.

"Have they taken you on at the mill?" he grunted.

"No," stammered the other. "But — "

The cook turned his back abruptly, and rolled out the crust for a second pie and a third. When he looked up at last to put the pastry into the oven the man had gone. From the door the cook watched him blundering up the hill.

When he had turned the curve and was lost to the sight of the mill, he still went on jerkily, like a machine that runs badly but does not know how to stop. Beneath his feet the Western Washington road ran beautiful and even, like a white stripe through ground-green cloth. Sometimes it was lacy openwork, for great cedars and firs flanked the road. Here and there belated dog-wood blossoms looked out, wax-like.

There were long, hot stretches of road, too, through half-miles of burned stumps of blighted trees. Sometimes in one of these sizzling half-miles the man stood still in the road for minutes, beneath the beating sun of June. At such times his smile quite distorted his face.

The afternoon was profoundly still except for the wood-voices. Birds crooned lazily in the tree-tops. A woodpecker tapped steadily away at a fir-tree trunk. Once a little striped squirrel teetered on a cedar branch, sitting there saucily unafraid, with his bushy tail lifted like a parasol over him. The man crept up noiselessly and bent over with a clutching hand. But his shadow warned the shrewd little son of the forest, and he was gone with a taunting little flirt of the tail. At last the man went on.

The sun slid down the side of Beaver Mountain. Gradually the sky, which had been so deeply and cloudlessly blue, became more vague and dim-colored. The shadows grew longer.

It was late afternoon when the man came suddenly upon a little shingle mill, perched almost upon the road. It was a

cheerful little place, with its red roof against the green of the trees. Every atom of it was in motion like water that boils. Flying saws buzzed through huge logs. The packers' hands flashed back and forth with regularity of shuttles. To the ear the drone of the mill was pleasantly mechanical.

For a long, long time the man stood quite still in the road, shading his hands with his eyes, and looked intently at the little mill. Once he made a step from the road in its direction. Then he shrugged his shoulders, smiled his joyless smile, and dazed onward.

A half mile down the road he stopped and seated himself upon a great, mossy log. Beneath the log, and on down the ravine a little brook went crying to itself. Alders tall and silver gray lifted themselves beyond the tangle of wild blackberry vines.

For an hour the man sat there motionless. Evening was almost upon the world. Cows went their homeward way, and nosed inquiringly at the silent figure. Once the man put his hand into his pocket, and drew out a worn purse of excellent leather. He opened it, fingered its handful of coppers, and smiled.

He put his hand into his pocket once more, and brought forth a cheap watch fob. There was no watch attached, but on one end was a little, old-fashioned locket of plain gold. The man snapped it open, and gazed for a long time at the pictured face. It was a very pretty, very haughty face held proudly above the beautiful shoulders. As he looked at it, all that was evil in the man's smile faded out, and left his face pure wistfulness.

Evening came, and a cougar somewhere in the hills called out with its lonesome, shivery, lost-baby cry. Its mate answered. The man on the log shuddered.

At last he put his hand into his pocket again, and drew out a tiny bottle. He sat toying with it for some minutes. Holding it high, he watched it catch the red glow of the late sunset. Then he lifted it to his lips, drained it, tossed away the bottle, and smiled.

The hunger lines on his face grew set and deep. His shoulders began to droop in a queer, unconscious way. All the youth left him suddenly, and he looked like an old man as he sat there.

A man of perhaps thirty came round the curve in the road,

walking heavily and whistling. He was tall and broad-shouldered, a splendid animal. His blue flannel shirt, open at the neck, disclosed a throat lean and hairy. He passed the man on the log, then turned back, struck by something in his attitude.

"Say!" he called loudly. "You looking for work?"

Very slowly the words penetrated to the consciousness of the man on the log. When he understood finally, he roused himself from his stupor, threw back his head and laughed.

"O, laugh you tramp!" exclaimed the giant, half good-naturedly, half contemptuously. "Maybe the idea of working for a living amuses you. But we need men bad at the shingle mill up the road, and if you really want work, here's your chance."

"My chance!" echoed the man on the log, and smiled for the last time.

Cupid of the Chair.*

BY HELEN ELLSWORTH WRIGHT.

IN the kitchen, sunshine, filtering through chinks of the mended shade, dappled the auction refreshments,— milk-pans of sandwiches, covered by dampened cloths,— cups, ready for coffee. The dining-room was over-full with furniture, but the closed parlor held only the one chair that was not for sale. Before it knelt Myra Curtis packing a smoking-jacket and a pair of embroidered slippers into a little box.

Outside, a cloth sign flaunted the words "Public Auction" across the cattle-shed. Tom Brannon, the auctioneer, swung suddenly from the platform with the gavel in his hand and made towards the house.

"Myra?" he called softly at the kitchen door. There was no response and he crossed the floor, purposely clattering a stool. In the dining-room, he waited, calling a second time. Presently, he strode determinedly to the parlor door. "Are you in there?" he demanded, drumming with his finger-tips on the panel.

She was silent.

Turning the knob, he stood awkwardly before her, his sensitive florid face tell-tale with emotion.

Myra sprang up, thrusting the jacket behind her in an ineffectual effort to conceal it with her skirts. One of the slippers fell at his feet.

Brannon picked it up and turned it over a time or two, his eyebrows arching.

"Was that your father's?" he gently asked.

The blood surged to her forehead, then drained away. For a moment, she was giddy and closed her eyes. She had made those slippers for Tom in the days when he used to bring her

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home from choir-practice, and he had never known. When she opened her eyes again, Brannon was wonderingly drawing the jacket into view.

"And was that your father's?" he persisted.

To the woman, it was as if he were peeling the outer layers from her soul. That had been made before their quarrel, when he used to come on Sundays and sit in her chair. A terror seized her lest he should divine it.

"Were those things your father's?"

She shook her head.

"Then whose were they?"

He had probed the quick of her secret. A Curtis, she had boasted, never evaded, never deceived. For generations, not a scion of the house had lied. She grew suddenly defensive for the girl who was herself,— the girl whose portion of love had been so small. What would he think if he knew that often at night, in that magic hour when the dew spills the scent of the flowers, she came into this front room and deliberately evolved from her fancy, his figure sitting in the big armchair?

"Aren't you going to tell me whose they were?" There was insistent persuasiveness in his voice.

Again, she shook her head.

The sun, blazing against the yellowish linen shades, lent a peculiar glow to the room; it intensified the red that surged to the roots of Brannon's hair.

"Well," he conceded, "they couldn't have been anybody's but your father's! Your mother wouldn't have worn them."

His conclusion stung; it was as though he had twitted her with poverty. What right had he to infer that she had never had a lover! An uncontrollable something within her rose to battle for her pride.

"They could have been somebody's else!" she retorted. They are some one's else. They are — *his*!"

"His?" Brannon repeated, as if stupefied.

All at once, to her over-wrought fancy, she seemed standing in the middle of her desert life. Behind, lay the trail of her colorless years; before, they reached to a gray horizon. A rebellious humiliation possessed her. She had slaved to hold

the ranch; she had lost it. To-day, her home would be sold; to-morrow, with her trunk and her chair, she would cross the tuleland to the town, branded "Failure" and without the aureola of a romance. Romance was a woman's heritage! Out of her loneliness rose a mastering impulse to claim one.

"Yes, *his*!" she cried, defiantly. "They belong — to the *man who cares*!" The words out, she longed to retract them. Her father used to say a lie was the passport to Damnation. She had told one!

It was very still in the room; the hush jeered her. Her heart was pounding in her ears.

"There is a man who cares!" she steadily asserted. "He comes every night. He sits in that chair. That's why it is not for sale!" She stopped, breathless, wondering if God would strike her dead.

Bewilderment, astonishment, denial successively registered on Brannon's face. She saw that between him and her were filing all her days,— that he knew they held no lover but himself. Goaded, an unreasoning will possessed her. She would convince him! She must!

"He's true, and fine, and wonderful," she proclaimed. "He— loves me, and every night he — comes to tell me so!" She forced herself to meet the amazement in the eyes above her. There was no retreat.

"He brings me pinks, and dahlias, and pansies, and lavender sticks, and — mignonette!" She paused, panting; still the words crowded her for utterance. She nerved herself to them. "He comes when the dew's on the flowers, and rests in the dusk in my chair. And I'm not lonesome! And I'm not a failure!"

In the dreaded silence that followed, Brannon swayed towards her; his eyes were very tender.

"Where is he now?" he demanded.

Her head drooped.

Tom's voice was scarcely audible. "I know how it is," he confessed. "When I put up that little home in the valley, I used to *make believe* that — somebody was there! I set out lilacs, and roses and petunias, because — I knew *somebody* who'd have liked them."

At last, the auction was over. The tail team creaked behind the cattle-shed and wound across the stubble towards town. A solitary blue crane winged screaming up from the tule, and countless marsh birds chattered unmolested.

In the little upstairs bedroom, Myra rose from her knees. Her face was gray. She knew, and Tom Brannon knew, and God knew that she, the last of the Curtis's, had lied! She stared drearily from the window. On the refreshment table, empty pans flickered back reflections to the setting sun. She must go out there and gather them in.

She did not see Brannon enter one door as she passed out from the other. Mechanically, she gathered the cups and strung them by their handles on a cord. She piled the pans and the platters; then, sinking to the bench, she folded her arms on the table and stared across the marsh.

The sun went down. Wind scudded through the tule; blackbirds gossiped in the tenantless corrals. Gradually, their voices lulled to drowsy twitterings. Still, she did not stir. Over and over she repeated, — "'Wherewith shall I make atonement?'"

A coppery moon peered over the stubble. She could smell the honeysuckle on her porch; its swinging censers called her to the closed front room. She stood up, determined. Her breath came with an effort; her hands were as ice, but she walked unflinchingly to the woodpile. Fiercely, she split a box into strips.

"'He that kindleth a fire shall surely make restitution'," she quoted. "It ought to atone to give up the only thing I've got!" Every blow of the hatchet seemed striking her heart.

She carried the wood to the open, facing town. Laboriously, she pulled up clumps of stubble and formed with them a huge ring, then added kindlings, setting each taper-like on end. In the corral, she found a few loose boards. When the pyre was finished, it was long and broad and flat. Still the honeysuckle called.

The moon, filtering through the cedars, fell in white patches on the silent house. The doors gaped; the curtain-denuded windows stared at her like lidless eyes. Only the flowers poured out familiar fragrance and in the closed front room, she knew stood the big armchair.

She dragged herself through the empty dining-room to the door beyond. Her strength seeped from her so she could not turn the knob and she waited, for a moment, by the wall. Outside, the wind squeaked a twig against the window pane. Once, she was sure she heard a sound in the adjoining room. Her heart lost a beat, then pounded. She edged to the door. It was her last night in a home. A yearning possessed her to conjure once more with fancy before she burned the chair, — to sit in the soft scented dusk and make believe — Slowly she turned the knob.

The chair stood in a flood of moonlight, occupied!

Myra Curtis did not scream. At first, her feet refused to carry her; then she advanced determinedly to the middle of the room. Half way across the floor, she stopped and shut her eyes. She opened them; it was no illusion; there was some one in the chair. She did not recognize Brannon, though he tried to speak.

"It is not true!" she affirmed, nearing a step. "It will go presently," she asserted, her voice rising. "If I touch it — " She reached out and a firm warm hand closed over hers.

"Myra," Brannon began, but she was on her knees.

"It's judgment upon me," she moaned, "to believe what *isn't* and touch what I *know's not there*!"

"Myra!" Brannon called. "Myra!"

"Thou hast said 'I will repay'," she whispered, "but I thought if I burned the chair — "

Brannon caught her by the shoulders, shaking her. "Myra Curtis," he blurted, "It's this fool me! I've had something to tell you for months! I couldn't find a way till you said — the man who loved you sat in the dark in this chair!"

She got to her feet, dazed, ashamed, humiliated. "But — there *isn't* any man!" she confessed. "There never has been! I — lied!"

"No, — no you didn't!" His arms comforted; his tones caressed. "You said there's some one who cares, and there is! You said he comes to tell you about it; he has come. He can't bring you 'pansies and dahlias'; won't the lilacs and roses do?"

"Unclean." *

BY R. E. MARSHALL.

IT was a night such as poets dream of but seldom see. A night when glamor and romance and subtle mystery are in the air. A night for music, for love legends, and tales of chivalry, when the nameless charm that lies in ancient ballads, in the sight of armor, or of castles scarred with the wars of kings long dead, when the power that arises like a perfume from these things is strong, and harsh and commonplace realities fade away. A night so beautiful it should have been hallowed and nothing but beauty had power to stir abroad.

Under its charm the high-railed garden and quiet streets of St. Louis Square in Old New Orleans were a fit stage for a medieval drama or poet's dream come true.

So great is the transforming power of moonlight that the buildings on either side of the Square, once palaces for French and Spanish nobility, now Italian tenements, took on something of their former dignity and beauty. It wrapped them in a veil of silver and cast softly rounded shadows and quivering half-lights on their stained and crumbling door-posts ; made even the dish cloths and old shirts, hung about, suggest banners and tapestries flung out to welcome some new prince or stately embassy from afar. It picked out the exquisite tracery of the iron railings, and gleamed a glory around the head of Jackson on his plunging iron horse, rising dark and still out of the fragrant tangle of pomegranate and oleander and starred jasmine.

There should have come, perhaps, out of their graves in the Cathedral facing the Square, a tonsured monk, or a proud Spanish dame, or a pale light-haired woman in whose veins there ran a drop of that blood which is a curse, forever setting her apart, too high for her mother's people, too low for her father's, forever

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debarred by Nature's inexorable law that punishes through reversion to type.

But there came none of these ; there came a woman, bent, unevenly shrunken, dressed in black and heavily veiled. Slowly and painfully she moved down the Cathedral steps, across the empty street, between the Venetian lamps, burning yellowly, into the silver silence of the Square.

She paused peering about, but seeing no one threw back her veil with a strangely broken indrawing of the breath. Behind her, flame-colored pomegranate blossoms swayed and gleaming banana fronds clapped softly and a bird sang exultingly back in the dim mysterious reaches of the garden, pierced in flickering spots and curved spaces by the moonlight that, as the woman lifted her veil, fell startlingly clear and strong across her face.

It was white, not with the even pallor of death, but chalky, like paper twisted and ravaged and worn away in places as an image is worn away by storms and long exposure.

Out of its mask-like hideousness her eyes, liquid, creole eyes, looked out at the beauty of the night with the passionate longing of the exile, across the garden to the lights gleaming in the houses with an utter and agonized loneliness.

A magnolia petal detached itself and fell with ever so slight a sound, but she started and clutched at her veil. She knew that if seen she would be followed and the shelter of the near-by little house behind the tall green fence, inside of which no one ever saw, would be taken away and she be sent to the Island with other lepers.

But no one came, and she went slowly down the curving walk arched over with oleanders that dropped their waxy blossoms on her head and cast long, narrow, black shadows of leaves that formed themselves into innumerable crosses so that her way was paved with them.

Presently the walk came out in a flood of light and there on a bench a man lay asleep, face upwards.

The woman, quite close, suddenly perceived him and with a shuddering cry cowered back into the dark, peering out as though fascinated by the sleeping face. A handsome face it was, though weak, older than its years and lined by hard living and drink.

With wide eyes in which pain and a dazed joy fought for supremacy the woman watched him.

Twenty years had passed since she had seen him ; twenty years since the night when, dressing for her wedding with him, she had found a white spot on her arm and recognized the doom that was hers. Twenty years she had hidden away in the little house behind the tall green fence, nor heard a word nor seen a face from all her world, her gay French world she loved so. No one knew who lived in the little house ; men said it was haunted. Strange noises were heard there ; hurrying passers-by declared that the fig and myrtle tops above the fence stirred when the trees on the side-walk were still ; an old negress told in nerve-crinkling whispers how once at early dawn and once late at night she had seen a black-robed figure going soundlessly in the high gate. And so, as about all things not understood, legends grew, woven out of the fancy of the superstitious, and wrapped the house in a veil of mystery and tragedy that shut it from the outside world more securely than stone walls and iron barred gates.

Mystery there was and sublime tragedy behind the tall green fence.

And as she stood there alone after twenty years with her lover cast up, as it were, at her feet by one of those strange waves of fate which wreck and save according to no man's plans, according to laws no man may understand, a flood of memories overwhelmed her, shook her body and soul, the surge of a love great enough to hide itself from the beloved, to sustain her through nights and days and years alone with the Fear.

A longing possessed her to reach out her hand and touch him ; touch the lock of hair gray but curling in the old way over the forehead ; a longing to prove to herself that this time he was no dream, to melt away into the bitter loneliness of the little house, a longing so potent that for a moment she forgot even the Fear, forgot that her beauty had gone years and years ago, that she was an outcast, a horror, a Thing scarcely human in shape whose breath was pestilence and whose touch, contagion.

She pulled a rose, a red rose, their sign in the old days : she would put it in his hand. He would wake and see it. Would he

know and understand ? He might never know and even cast it away ; but she would know and it would be a comfort in the long empty days behind the excluding green fence.

She reached out her hand with the rose. Two of the fingers were gone, the flesh was rotting upon the third and a bit of bone projected from the second joint of the fourth. He was homeless and penniless, asleep on a bench in a public park. He was her lover of old from whom she had hidden twenty years lest he find her and follow her as she knew he would have done despite the Fear. The moonlight fell ghastly white upon her hand and she drew it back into the shadow. She was a leper. She might not give him even a rose. The red line of an unhealed scar showed across the hand that lay, slender and long fingered, across his chest. In the rose might be death ; more than death ; the Fear.

He stirred and muttered in his sleep. The woman crushed the scarlet petals in her hand and drawing down her veil walked with bent head and hurrying, uncertain steps away into the silent darkness of the path leading to the little house behind the tall green fence.

The Tear of Niobe.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

TAMU YATSUMA was the possessor of a rose pearl. It was a beautiful pearl. It was shaped like one of the tears of Niobe, and in its bosom the dawn-flush glowed like the crimson upon the face of a maid who listens to the first words of love.

Tamu thought that none knew of his possession, but Tamu was wrong. Even if one has the face of a stone Buddha one cannot altogether smother the longings let loose by the sudden acquisition of riches. To the very watchful the knowledge comes in many ways, and Hiro Kayimura, who bossed the pearling lugger with its mixed crew of Javanese, Kanakas and Klings, was very watchful. His men seldom spoke, and a movement was often the sole basis for his marvelous deductions. Therefore he sat upon a gin box on the deck of his craft and only blinked his eyes when the sun-flame temporarily blinded him.

But he never blinked when Tamu Yatsuma came to the surface after nuzzling in the silt where the blacklipped shells lay ten fathoms below. His eyes at such times were little slits with an all-absorbing capacity, for it was then that Tamu's thoughts told what his face hid beneath a veneer of stoicism cultivated through fifty centuries. And they told more than words to Hiro sitting on the gin box. The moment the diver's head flashed through the jade green water, those desires that were longing to be satisfied wrenched his face to the south where a chiffon cloud hung over the rice-white beach below Port Kennedy. It was all so plain that Hiro could hardly restrain a smile. Tamu was the possessor of a pearl!

Hiro let his imagination wander as Tamu slipped beneath the surface. It took him across the red and green splashed sea,

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past the fleet of prahus that reeked of turtle and trepang, raced him up the path leading from the rice-white beach, and brought him to the door of Zeiglestein, the beche-de-mer buyer, who bought pearls on the cross. Hiro allowed a speeding sneer to flash across his face. It was so evident that Tamu Yatsuma had a pearl — a big pearl if Hiro could judge by the way in which his head was continually wrenched shorewards — and he wanted to exchange it for money at Zeiglestein's.

"It must be a very fine pearl," muttered Hiro, as the diver once more sank beneath the water. "He has looked towards Zeiglestein's seven and twenty times this day."

That night Hiro produced a greasy pack of cards and challenged Tamu to a game, and Tamu accepted. He was restless with the shore longing, and he welcomed the excitement. They played beneath the flaring lamp in the little cabin of the lugger, and the rest of the crew looked on.

Hiro won steadily. Tamu's thoughts were busy calculating what Zeiglestein would give him for the tear of Niobe, and his calculations ruined his play. Each heart and diamond on the much-fingered cards became a pear-shaped pearl, and even the spades and clubs turned rose-colored under the influence of the thoughts that filled his brain. Again and again he lost, but Hiro taunted him and he continued to play.

Tamu staked his wages for the month and Hiro won. He staked the next month's and the next with like result. There was only one line for his thoughts, and as that line was between the pearl in his loin cloth and the low bungalow of Zeiglestein, Victory smiled upon his opponent.

At last Tamu threw down his cards and rose from the table.

"No more," he growled. "I have no more."

Hiro sneered. "You have more," he whispered.

Tamu sat down and glared at him. "Me?" he queried. "Me have what?"

"Something," laughed the other.

The broad nostrils of Tamu pulsed rapidly, and the forehead veins ridged themselves upon the wet skin. Hiro was sure it was a big pearl. With a sweep of his brown hand he gathered the coins into a heap and flung the cards across the table.

"This money and the wages — the three months' wages against it!" he cried excitedly.

Tamu Yatsuma gripped the hand that pushed the cards towards him and bent the fingers back till Hiro winced. "Against what?" he cried, savagely. He pushed his face across, and the lugger boss tried to get away from his fierce breath.

"Against what?" repeated Tamu, and the words cut through the hot air of the cabin and rushed out over the sobbing Pacific. Tamu's hand was on his knife, and for a minute he had Hiro at his mercy. And it was undiplomatic to accuse Tamu of being the possessor of a big pearl while he had the advantage. Hiro was aware of it and he temporized.

"You have your father's soul," he panted; "I will play you for that."

The crew laughed boisterously, and Tamu joined in as he released his grip of the other's hand.

"Play heem, Tamu; play heem," shouted the onlookers. "Play heem for it an' win back the moneys."

Tamu laughed, half rose from his seat, then dropped back into the chair. Intuitively he knew that Hiro had some knowledge of his find, and the hate thus brought about made him take kindly to the chance of winning back his losses by staking something that was beyond Hiro's power to collect. He gripped the cards and dealt them quickly.

"My father's soul against the wages and the money," he cried, and he laughed as he thought of the corner in which he had placed Hiro by forcing him to say what he meant by the innuendo.

There was absolute silence while the two played. Hiro's little eyeslits were narrowed to their smallest seeing compass, and his gaze was concentrated upon Tamu's cards till the pearl owner felt that his hands were scorched by the glare.

Hiro knew that he had made a blunder by making the fool admission regarding his opponent's father, but he was resolved that the soul of the dead parent would be his in name before the night was over.

Tamu tried to keep his mind away from the pearl, but his thoughts fed on it hungrily, and ignored his vain appeals when the boss of the lugger was making his winning points. When

Hiro flung down the winning card, Tamu rose with an oath and stumbled to his bed.

On the following day Hiro lost no time in making use of the uncollectable part of the winnings that he had acquired from Tamu. He very ingeniously used the soul of the dead parent as a butt for the curses that on other days had been distributed over the entire crew, and murder flared up in the heart of the diver. But Hiro remembered how he was caught napping on the night previous and he took no chances. He cursed the soul of Tamu's parent well, but he cursed judiciously. That is, he did it with his face turned towards the son who had gambled the soul away.

"And is it not my soul to curse as I please?" asked Hiro, when the diver's mutterings became loud and fierce. "Did you not stake it against my good money which you would have used if luck had been with you? Work hard and earn some money so that you can play the cards again and win it back." Hiro's logic was unanswerable and the crew sided with him.

The tactics maddened Tamu. Again and again he plunged into the green water to escape the biting words of Hiro. His thoughts were torn away from the pearl and were busy planning for revenge. The tear of Niobe grew small beside his agony, and his brain swelled. When the lamp was lighted in the little cabin he flung the cards across the table to Hiro, and then fumbled nervously in his loin cloth.

"Play!" he shrieked, as he placed the pearl in the centre of the table. "Stake the soul of my father against it and win it if you can."

Hiro gasped when he saw the rose-colored gem. It was larger than he had dreamed, much larger. His breath came in little sobs to him, and it sounded queerly as he listened to the slow heavy breathing of the others.

"Play!" yelled Tamu. "May my father fight with me."

The game started. Tamu's elbows were placed squarely on the table, and he studied the cards with a brow ploughed with the furrow of thought. He had to win. He wanted the pearl; besides, he could not live through another day like the one he had passed.

But Hiro was a card adept. He played skilfully, and jerked little grunts from the spectators by his brilliancy. But his breathing troubled him. He remembered on one occasion years before that his breath came in just such short panting puffs.

Tamu's welts of worry grew deeper as the other's advantage became more perceptible. Hiro's cards were devil chosen. The sweating watchers were awestruck at the manner in which he took point after point. Tamu fought him craftily, but Hiro gurgled with glee as he pulled the game his way. Another point and the pearl was his. Tamu played, his eyes fixed on the other. Hiro lifted the hand that held the winning card and reached out the other for the Tear of Niobe, but neither hand fulfilled its mission. Hiro's heart stopped at that important moment, and he fell back in his seat, the winning card clasped in his fingers.

Tamu picked up the pearl and folded it in his loin cloth.

"That was my father's work," he said, slowly. "I saw the spirit strangle him as he reached for it. The pearl is still mine because he didn't play his last card."

But Zeiglestein, the pearl buyer, laughed when he heard the story of the spiritual interference. "If Tamu's father vos haf any lofe for his poy," he growled, "he vould haf let him lose de pearl. He vos drink all de fine money I paid him for it, an' den he gets locked up in jail."

Zeiglestein, however, did well out of the bargain. The Tear of Niobe was exhibited in the window of a jeweler in Queen Street, Brisbane, and was purchased at a sum that was fifty times greater than that received by Tamu.

An Error of the Law.*

BY ALFRED DAMON RUNYON.

ASTLE MOUND, Sioux County, Colorado, is a town with a population of some three hundred souls. It lies baking in the sun on that broad stretch of barren prairie land which sprawls between the Kansas state line and the smiling Arkansas valley. A huddle of adobe shanties and a few more pretentious frame houses constitute the town. Ten miles to the westward is the town of Leads, the counterpart of Castle Mound, and the county seat of Sioux County. If it were not for the signs on the tiny shacks dignified by the name of depots, a stranger could hardly tell one town from the other.

I was sitting on my trunk by the depot in Castle Mound, waiting for the Missouri Pacific train which would take me to Pueblo, when I was joined by "Dad" Watson, the storekeeper of Castle Mound and the town oracle. "Dad" had lived in Castle Mound since the cowboys first furnished the nucleus for the town by making camps there. I made room for him on the trunk as he approached and the old fellow sat down with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Dad," I asked after some desultory conversation, "Why didn't you Castle Mound folks get the county seat instead of letting it go to Leads there?" and I pointed to the latter town in the distance.

"Dad" turned slowly around and gazed at me, puffing his pipe in a meditative fashion.

"Son," he finally said, "do you fetch up that subject in a friverlous way, or are you shore mired in the bog of ignorance?"

I assured him that the question was asked in all innocence and he seemed satisfied.

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"That there matter is what you might call a saddle-sore with the citizens of Castle Mound," he said. "We had the county seat once, but a woman stole it."

I looked my surprise and the old man went on:

"Yessir, a woman stole it. Mrs. Jaggs, it were, that absconded like a thief in the night with the county seat and left Castle Mound to mourn. Aided and abetted by a legal shark, Leads now sits grinning in full, but not undisputed, possession of the said seat of government of Sioux county.

"It was three years ago that this purloining of the government took place. Castle Mound had been the county seat for twenty year or more before Leads came to botch up the surface of the ground. We had the court house in the back room of my store, and there the county officials sot and done business to the satisfaction of all law abidin' citizens, which don't mean them people of Leads.

"'Long about four years ago, a man named Jimpson, from Pueblo, came to Sioux county and showed his poor judgment by settling at Leads. This Jimpson was a boomer from Boomersville. He had a lot of ideas to make Leads about the biggest town between the Mississippi river and Fr'isco, and among other things he told them people that they ought to have the county seat. Now, before this Jimpson came, nobody in Leads was dissatisfied with Castle Mound as the county seat. These are the only two towns to speak of in the county, and we used to give Leads half the county offices. But this Jimpson feller, he commenced showing them Leads folks where they'd gain a whole lot more importance by having their town the county seat and they finally believed it.

"Jimpson, he points out where Leads is more the joggerfal centre of the county than Castle Mound, which is true all right, and he showed them that there was just as many people in Leads as Castle Mound, which was also true. Them Leads folks finally winds up by going to law.

"They gets a decision of court which says that the people of Sioux county shall vote to see whether they wants to change the county seat or not. Us Castle Mound people didn't pay much attention to the thing one way or 'tother. We had been the

county seat so long we didn't think we could be ousted. So when the time for that vote business came around we didn't do no work to speak of and them Leads scallawags just naturally outvoted us. They rustled up a lot of cow punchers from off the range, filled them full of whisky and voted them, which made up any deficiency. According to the testimony of the ballot box, the people of Sioux county yearned for a change in the base of governmental operations.

"That vote business jarred Castle Mound considerable. We knew the ballot box lied and that there had been some shenanegan work, but we couldn't prove it. The date for the removal of the county seat was set for two weeks after election. All that meant was taking the books of the various officers down to Leads. In the meantime we did a whole lot of hard thinking. The county officers were served with notices of the result of the election and commanded to move on a certain date to Leads, and there was no doubt but what we'd have to do it. If it had been in the old days we would have just cleaned up our guns and told the Leads outfit to come and get them books if they wanted them and we'd have held the fort until Hades friz over, but nowadays law is law, and they won't stand for no monkey business like that no more.

"I was sheriff then; the treasurer, old Bill Stimson, was a Castle Mound man, so was the assessor and clerk and two of the county commissioners. Leads had the rest of the offices, which included Mrs. Jaggs, who was county superintendent of schools. Sioux county had followed out the woman suffrage fashion all over Colorado and give that office to a woman. It didn't amount to much one way or 'tother, the salary being small and the work light, but it required the presence of the holder in the county seat a good part of the time.

"Of course us Castle Mound officials wanted the county seat to stay here and them Leads people were tickled to death because they was going to get it. They had to drive every morning over here and drive back at night to Leads, and it was rather wearing on horseflesh any time, and on tempers during stormy weather.

"This Mrs. Jaggs was a tall, gangling old woman, sour as lemons, and with a temper like a cross-cut saw. She come from

New England somewhere and had been a school teacher. Not dispargin' our own women, I will say that Mrs. Jaggs was about the capablest woman in the county for the job. In addition to being county superintendent she run a little merchandise store at Leads. What with the store and the job she did pretty well, I guess, though without the store the job wouldn't have kept her, and vice versy! Her husband was a drunken old slouch who never did amount to anything. He wouldn't work, and he'd putter around the store while Mrs. Jaggs was in Castle Mound, spending most of the money he took in for whiskey. If it had a-been myself I'd a-been afraid to fool with Mrs. Jaggs like that, but I guess her old man got used to her.

"You can see how it was to Mrs. Jaggs' interest to have the county seat moved. It it was in Leads she could keep tab on the old man and the job too, so she was pretty much tickled over the way the election come out.

"It looked like we was licked bad, when Bill Stimson got an idea — the first, last and only time Bill ever did such a thing. He communicates it to a few of us Castle Mound officials, and we sends Bill hastening to Pueblo to carry it out. You see, this county is in the Tenth judicial district which takes in several other counties, court being held at Pueblo. Bill goes there and consults an attorney and the attorney applies to the court for an injunction against the county officials of Sioux county to prevent them from removing the county record from Castle Mound to Leads. Bill alleges that fraud has been discovered in connection with the election and wanted a further hearing in court. He also alleged everything else he could think of from murder to arson, because we had figured that if we got a chanst to put our case before the court in the right way we could win — what with buying the testimony of a few of them drunken cowboys who had voted for Leads, and other little matters of that kind. So, the day before the removal was to take place, Judge Dickson of the district court issues his injunction, directed against each and every one of the county officials of Sioux county.

"In getting up that injunction the clerk of the court made a small mistake. The writ simply forbid Sheriff Watson, Treasurer Bill Stimson, Superintendent Jaggs, etcetery, from remov-

ing them books of the county of Sioux, or molesting them in any way. It didn't say where from, or where to. We found out about this mistake later. A deputy sheriff was sent from Pueblo to serve this injunction and we expected him and Bill in on the morning train. That removal was due the next day, but us officials was going to see to it that it was delayed until we'd been served by that injunction. "That night I met Mrs. Jaggs in my store, which was rather surprising, as she generally went home before dark. 'Howdy,' I says, polite like, 'ain't you around pretty late?'

"'I'm packing up my books,' she snaps. 'Didn't you know we've got to move to-morrow?'

"I grins a great big grin, and right then and there I proceeds with the undoin' of Castle Mound. 'Don't you believe we'll move to-morrow,' says I. 'The seat of government of Sioux stays right here — for awhile anyway. You'd better go home, Mrs. Jaggs, and get some rest.'

"'What are you talking about, lunkhead?' she says, not very gentle. 'I always thought you were crazy, but I didn't think it was as bad as this.'

"This remark sorter made me warm under the collar, having Mrs. Jaggs question my mental facilities in that way, so I says: 'Crazy, eh? Just cast your optics over this,' and I shows her a telegram from Bill Stimson, which I'd got that afternoon and which says: 'Injunction granted and will be served first thing in the morning. Hooray!' It was signed 'Bill.'

"'So that's what Bill Stimson went to Pueblo for, is it?' asks Mrs. Jaggs, after reading the telegram. 'All right, then I guess there ain't no use me going ahead packing; I'll have to use my books to-morrow. But tell me about this injunction thing, Mr. Watson — what does it mean?'

"And so I tells Mrs. Jaggs all I know about injunctions and courts. She listens pretty intently and I see her eyes snap now and then, but finally she says quite nice like: 'I guess I'll have to go home. Thank you, Mr. Watson,' and she went out. Pretty soon I hear her rattling away in her buckboard behind her little broncos, which weren't much for looks but which could cover an almighty sight of ground, as we found out.

"I sleep in my store, and 'long about midnight that night I thought I heard wheels on the road outside. I thought it was some one coming in from the range and didn't pay much attention until the wheels seemed to stop by my store. I listened, but didn't hear nothing, so rolled over and went to sleep. A little later I woke up again and it seemed like some one was moving around in the back room where the court house was. I thought at first I'd been dreaming. Then come the rattle of wheels again, and I jumped up and looked out the window. It was moonlight and as plain as day, and I see Mrs. Jaggs in her buckboard going acrost the prairie like a streak. I lit a lamp and went and looked into the back room. Then I gives a whoop that could be heard a mile away and went screeching out into the street. That look into the back room showed me that the shelves which should have been bulging with the books and records of Sioux county were as clean as a whistle. There wasn't even a scrap of paper left.

"My hollering brought out a lot of people, all minus most of their clothes like myself and I explained as quick as I could. In the pale light of the moon I told them the news, and the wails and cusses which went up scart the coyotes into the hills. I wasn't no use giving chase because Mrs. Jaggs was plumb out of sight by the time I got through and none of us was dressed to make a foot race through the cactus. Some was for invadin' the town of Leads and wiping it off the map, but I calmed them.

"'Bill will be here with that injunction in the morning,' says I, 'and it won't do Mrs. Jaggs no good nohow to have them books. She'll have to bring them back.'

"There wasn't no sleep to speak of in Castle Mound after that. We sot around the store waiting for daylight and cussing Mrs. Jaggs right hearty.

"The morning train brought Bill and the deputy from Pueblo all right and we explained to them how Mrs. Jaggs had come in the night and nailed the books, which were then and there in her possession. The deputy sheriff he reads the injunction to me and Bill and all the rest of the officials in Castle Mound and then he takes my rig and starts for Leads. We wanted to send an escort with him as we didn't have no idea Mrs. Jaggs would let him read that thing to her peaceable, but he wasn't afraid.

"He come back in a couple of hours, but he didn't have no books. 'I'll have to get more instructions from the court on this here matter,' he said. 'She's got them books all right, and she let me read this injunction — but doggone it — well, I'll have to see the court,' and he looked dubious. We couldn't get no more out of him and he went back to Pueblo that night. He was back next day with a warrant for Mrs. Jaggs which accused her of contempt of court in disobeying that injunction and moving the books, and he also had a summons for myself and a lot of other officials to appear in court in connection therewith. We was mighty tickled and looked for Mrs. Jaggs to get about a year in jail as punishment. We all went down on the train to Pueblo together, but Mrs. Jaggs she didn't speak to any of us — only looked contemptuous and scornful-like. We all just grinned amiably at her.

"The deputy still looked dubious. 'They've got a guard of fifty armed men over them books down at Leads,' he says. He kept regarding Mrs. Jaggs admiring-like all the way down.

"Old Judge Saunders heard the case and he was a pretty fierce old codger, too. I was the first witness called and I told what I knew about Mrs. Jaggs taking them books. She was sitting close by me, still looking scornful, and when I told my story the court says:

"'Mrs. Jaggs, you not being represented by attorney, do you want to ask this witness any questions yourself?'

"'Just one,' she says. 'Mr. Watson, what time was it I took them books?'

"'Well,' says I, 'it was between 12 and 1, because I looked at my clock soon after I found you was gone.'

"'That's all,' she snaps. Then she takes the witness stand herself and produces a piece of paper. 'I'd like to have the clerk read this,' she says. It was the same kind of notice served on all us officials after the county seat election, commanding us to remove our books and offices to Leads on a certain date. 'Now,' says Mrs. Jaggs, 'I wish the clerk would read that injunction issued against the officials of Sioux county,' which was done.

"'Your honor,' says Mrs. Jaggs, 'you will note that according

to the testimony of Mr. Watson, I removed those books on the day commanded in the election notice, and before I was served with the injunction, of which I was not presumed to have knowledge. In removing them I simply obeyed a command of the law. You will also note that the injunction read by the clerk merely prohibits me and the other officials from removing or molesting the books in any way, but it does not say from what place we are prohibited from removing them. When that injunction was served upon me, the books were at my home in Leads, as your deputy sheriff will testify. If I, or any one else, had removed them from there and taken them back to Castle Mound, we would have been liable for contempt, because we would have been disobeying that injunction.

"'I contend that in taking the books from Castle Mound in the first place I was obeying the law; that in leaving them at Leads after I was served with the injunction, I was also obeying the law, and I ask that this case be dismissed.'

"Old Judge Saunders was kerflummuxed. He glared at Mrs. Jaggs over his specs for about five minutes. Then he came down from his bench, grabbed up that injunction and read it through. He glared at his clerk, and he glared at us until we got to feeling mighty uneasy. Finally the old judge commenced to laugh.

"'The defendant is right in every particular,' he says. 'The motion to dismiss is sustained. Mrs. Jaggs, you oughter been a lawyer,' and then he come right down and shook hands with her.

"Castle Mound was so flabbergasted that we never tried to go any further with the case, and that's why Leads is the county seat."

"How did Mrs. Jaggs know about the error in the injunction?" I asked.

"She didn't know at first — when she took the books, I mean," replied "Dad." "She got that by studying it afterwards. She was only taking a woman's chance to begin with."

The Veil of Convention.*

BY MARY MACMILLAN.

THEY were at a table near enough for me to hear vague bits of their conversation and far enough away to watch them without being detected. I was an alien in the city and had got into the habit of dining at this little hotel because of the comfort I had out of one of the waiter's intelligence. He seemed to divine my homelessness, but there was no fulsomeness in his sympathy, which would have exasperated me, only a delicate comprehension which waived any mention of the circumstances and was subordinated completely to my physical comforts. My table was always reserved for me by a window where I might find entertainment and could sit looking over my private mail and reading the evening paper as long as I chose. The waiter was a French-American and there had quickly grown up between us that comradeship sometimes to be found between the served and the serviter. To-night he was busy with these other people, which seemed to distress him keenly, and he came to explain the unavoidableness of the situation and assure me he would send me a good man.

The party at the other table would have compensated for any loss I might have had. They were four — a middle-aged pair, manifestly husband and wife, and a younger couple. The young man, by his hospitable details of manner, confessed himself the host. He was a handsome fellow, and though not tall had a satisfying symmetry of form tapering from the strong broad shoulders to the muscular slenderness of limb. His thick, straight brows, a protruding massiveness of forehead just over the eyes, and a squareness of jaw would have made his face a little heavy but for an opposing refinement. He had brilliant, winning eyes and under the close-cropped moustache a clean, thin-lipped mouth. He wore his clothes as if they belonged to him and were not a

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merely conventional society uniform, and there was no jewelry to adorn them, not even a watch-fob.

They were having a good dinner with several different kinds of wine and they were very gay over it, but that was not what caught my attention and held it as it is caught and held by consummate acting on the stage. They were all fine-looking, well-nourished, dressed with a richness and carelessness of fashion that told its own tale of good blood; but the core of their magnetism was their complete lack of self-consciousness, their abundance of self-confidence, the aplomb of self-development and successful living. They were jolly and laughing, enjoying their dinner, each other, life, and their atmosphere of content and power made them attractive and delightful.

It transpired that they were intending to go to the theatre, and as the time drew near for their departure there evidently arose a difference of opinion in regard to the purpose. The elder woman was immensely interested in the play that was to be put on ; the younger was not, did not wish to cut short her dining and had some other sort of amusement she preferred later. She, the young lady, was quiet and deferential and modest, but the secret disclosed itself that of all the sentient fascination the party had for an observer, she was the centre. She was dressed in a closely clinging gown of some sort of silky, shimmering, palest gray fabric, and a big black hat with big, soft, graceful plumes — an arrangement reminding one of the French and Madame Sarah Bernhardt's theory that a dark hat and light gown are most becoming. These became her. She was not distinctly beautiful, but she had a skin like the flush of a summer sunrise and wonderful eyes — they were pale green, perhaps, suggesting the sea, under low straight brows and with long straight lashes. When with lowered head she swept a side glance at one of her companions, you knew how he must thrill — you were thrilled at the mere contemplation. There was a deep darkness about her eyes in confusing contrast with the marvelous fairness of her skin. Her voice had the caressing sweetness that makes one glad as the scent of an old-fashioned garden pink, or the sound of a bell at evening, does. She would draw people to her, not by her perfect beauty, but by her warm radiancy of being, an ineffable loveliness.

The elder lady became at last laughingly impatient and the younger then with eager courtesy consented to go, but the older man interposed, and it was finally settled, after much good-natured banter, that the older couple should go to their box at the theatre and the younger would join them later either there or at the other place they had in mind. There was a display of the usual huge, stiff napkins and then of evening wraps, for it was spring and the night might be cool despite the alluring softness that came in through the open window, then the party had separated, and the young man and girl were left alone.

He took his seat again and there was at once a change felt. He instantly permitted himself the utterance of his feeling. She kept between them the barrier of playfulness, but conceded an intimacy in her glance and the subtle modification of manner towards him so startlingly different from her former general graciousness. The revelation was not of a growing friendship but of an understanding of the past that had outlasted something.

He called for a bottle of champagne and insisted upon drinking a health which she laughingly protested against, but the darkness around her eyes became deeper as it had when he first took his chair alone with her after the departure of their friends. He finally succeeded and when their glasses were lifted their hands touched and the glasses trembled.

His earnestness grew and he abandoned himself more and more to his feeling. As he leaned toward her his entire bearing became one of absorbed devotion and pleading desire, and under the influence of it her gay self-possession gave way, betraying a seriousness and agitation. The gauze curtains of social circumstance, of the so easily persuading self-confident manner, of outward harmony and content were all being lifted one after the other to disclose a flaming consciousness, conflicting forces, a soul's disquiet.

The other guests, in pleasure-engrossed couples and parties, had all gone, and even the waiters had discreetly disappeared, so that the dining-room was given over to the little drama. Out in the corridor the stringed orchestra was softly playing Mendelssohn's Spring Song and the seductive night wind of spring was coming in through the open windows.

The young man's voice clear and deep as it had been, became strident and hoarse with the will of his pleading. And finally the girl in all the glow of her charm, bent to him bewitchingly, her eyes haunting his, and reasoned with him and besought him.

As they contended, some little point would come up that was funny and they would both laugh gladly and harmoniously and as the fun slipped away she would hold on to it piteously but he as determinedly would drop back to his seriousness.

There was restlessness in every one of his quick, virile attitudes, a waiting energy in every gesture. He leaned his elbow on the table far over toward her and rested his head on his hand. The grace of her appeal to him seemed only to make his hope so much the more desirable. With her the intentional merriment of manner retreated before a gentler soberness. More and more the quiet that hid an intenser excitement, prevailed.

At last the orchestra was playing a part of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony when they rose to go. They were, after all their delaying, in abrupt haste and supremely regardless of spectators as they hurried out. He clasped her opera cloak about her and his hand lingered on her shoulder as though he were leading her out through the doorway.

My waiter appeared instantly and silently, standing by the table they had just left. He picked up a glass half filled with champagne that had stood between them, and brought it over to me. Holding it up skilfully in front of me towards the electric light he drew my attention to it. There at the bottom, among the tiny round bubbles forever rising, not much darker in the light liquid itself, lay the hollow gold circlet of a wedding ring.

Jacob Schultz, Recruit.*

BY EDWIN JEWETT BRACKEN.

THE stairway led up to the second floor at No. 486 Bowery, and at its foot stood one of Uncle Sam's regulars, clad in the conventional blue of the dress uniform, immaculate from the crown of the natty cap to the soles of the glistening shoes.

The crossed rifles on the cap, the polished brass buttons down the front of the glove-fitting coat, and even the slender cartridges in the pipe-clayed belt shone like gold. Spotless white gloves completed this picture of martial elegance.

From one of the windows of the second floor hung, waving above the heads of pedestrians, the tricolored folds of the National Emblem, while the legend over the narrow doorway: "U. S. Army Recruiting Office," conveyed to the passer-by the information that this was one of the supply depots for our human fighting material.

Across the sidewalk flamed forth a gaudy poster of groups of trimly built soldiers — some riding magnificent chargers, others standing in graceful attitude, conversing together with quiet dignity, but all garbed in the magnificent blue and red and gold of the full dress uniform.

Above this martial scene appeared the words in large, bright red letters: "Men Wanted for the United States Army," while in very small type at the bottom of the picture was a table setting forth the rates of pay and the grades of rank that could be attained by all applicants for enlistment.

Comparatively few of those who passed appeared to notice either the printed or the human advertisement, for the busy metropolitan crowds, surging and streaming through the great

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city's arteries of trade, take little heed of anything not connected with the pursuit of the almighty dollar.

Occasionally, however, a man would pause in the front of the poster long enough to take in the details of the picture, soon allowing his eyes to wander from the alluring product of the lithographer's art to the soldierly reality across the sidewalk; then, seeming to feel the impossibility of being able himself to approach the standard of the perfect types of military manhood thus displayed, he would continue on his way.

The soldier at the door shifted easily from one foot to the other, looking out upon the crowds with a nonchalant indifference bred of daily performance of the same monotonous duty, and was waiting for the clock in the watchmaker's window across the street to indicate the end of his two hour tour, when a rather shabbily dressed young man, whom he had observed studying the poster for a considerable time, crossed over to the doorway and inquired if he could enlist.

"Walk right upstairs, please, and see the sergeant," said the soldier. "First door to the left."

The applicant, after a moment's hesitation, entered the doorway and slowly climbed the stairs. Then obeying the sharp "Come in" that his knock called forth, he slouched awkwardly into the room and instinctively removed the battered derby as he met the penetrating eye of the dapper man in uniform behind the low, flat-topped desk.

His errand was all too plain, and the enterprising sergeant wasted no time in applying the usual stock questions and recording the answers thereto upon the blank form known as: "Application for Enlistment," which when completed and signed, declared that Jacob Schultz was born in Posey County, State of Indiana, was 22 years of age, by occupation a farm hand, had never served a term in prison, had never served before in the Army, Navy or Marine Corps of the United States, was willing to obey the orders of the President and such other officers as might be appointed over him, and to accept such pay, bounty, rations, clothing, etc., as it might please the Government to provide.

It required nothing now but the searching physical examination by the surgeon, and the solemn oath taken before the captain in

the adjoining room, to transform the applicant into the embryo soldier with the official title of Recruit Jacob Schultz, Infantry, Unassigned, United States Army.

The sergeant now conducted him to a set of rooms in the rear of the building where he was provided with a blanket, sheets and pillow and assigned to a cot for the night. He learned that he, with two other recruits, enlisted earlier in the day, would constitute a party leaving Pier 12, East River, the following morning for the recruiting rendezvous at Fort Slocum on the Government steamer *General Meigs*.

At the Fort he was regularly assigned to Recruit Company No. 3, and was fitted out with a "hand-me-down" uniform of blue, baggy and crumpled from long storage in the crowded warehouse (to be fitted to him later by the post tailor), a natty bell-crowned cap, a stout pair of serviceable soldier shoes, a supply of socks, underwear, etc., and last, but by no means the least important, a huge cake of yellow soap. It was impressed upon him that the latter was the most useful and necessary article in his possession, and that its constant use would very largely contribute to future agreeable relations with his military superiors, while derelictions in this respect would be followed by swift and inevitable punishment.

Here began the long period of drills and exercises which were calculated to straighten his back and shoulders, limber his muscles and accustom him to that immediate and mechanical obedience to commands that constitutes the very foundation of the smoothly running machine known as the regular army.

He found that hundreds of other young men were here, like himself, being molded into fighting men, and from time to time the ones considered proficient in the rudiments of the soldier's craft would be sent away in parties of varying size to join the companies or troops which for the next three years at least would constitute their only homes, thus scattering throughout the mother country or perchance to far off stations in Alaska, Cuba, Hawaii and the Philippines.

Many times during his first few weeks of military apprenticeship did Recruit Schultz wish himself back on the Indiana farm. He felt that even the coarse, scanty food and harsh treatment of

his late guardian, Silas Fielding, would be preferable to this bone-breaking, muscle-twisting recruit drill, and he tried with all the energy of his awkward, untrained body to satisfy the insistent demands of those tireless, lynx-eyed drill sergeants, who, though for the most part fair-minded, seemed to be inexorable and uncompromising in their requirements of the luckless recruits.

At length, however, he was assigned to a party to be sent to Fort Douglas, Utah, where the 31st Infantry was preparing for a tour of foreign service in the Philippines. It seemed to him that the five-day trip across the country was the happiest time of his life — the relief from those awful recruit drills the greatest pleasure he had ever known — but still he was anxious to arrive at his new station and take his place as a real soldier in a permanent fighting unit of the army. He wondered if all his new comrades would prove to be such perfect specimens as his recent drill masters, and hoped that they would not resent his presumption in marring their ranks with his still stiff and stilted movements.

When at last the party reached the Fort and its members were duly reported and received at the Adjutant's office, he found himself and his recent "bunkie" of the tourist car, "Paddy" McGuire, assigned to "D" company, and, in charge of an orderly, these two were soon on their way to the barracks.

In soldier parlance recruits are known as "rookies," and the newest and most awkward individual usually carries this "handle" to his name until, upon the arrival of a greener subject, the title is transferred.

So it was that poor Jacob was known as "Rookie Schultz"; but by his cheerful attention to duty and good natured acceptance of jokes and pranks at his expense, he soon became a prime favorite in the company. By the time the regiment started for the Philippines he was fully established in his new life and Silas Fielding and Fort Slocum were to him but painful dreams.

. . . . . .

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, and the tropical sun beat with unceasing, blistering fury upon all things exposed along that stretch of sandy beach which bounds the west coast of the Island of Leyte in the Philippines.

All live things indigenous to the country were long since enjoying the inevitable siesta which begins at noon and continues until the angle of the sun's rays becomes obtuse enough to be bearable.

Not so, however, with the American soldiers. Here, as well as at home, they are ever on the move, and be it sun, or rain, or typhoon, they seem ever to be in the thick of it.

Thus, on the day in question, a little party was moving briskly along the beach, each man peering at intervals into the heavy, dank foliage which formed the inner edge of that blistering strip of sand. Evidently they were in search of something, and, to judge from the nature of their calling, this something was no doubt something alive, something human.

Six they were, all bronzed and lean from the gruelling hikes in that torrid climate. The leader was a tall, sinewy specimen — typical of that class of regular infantrymen, who, having served three or four enlistments, now considered themselves as permanent fixtures in Uncle Sam's big military family.

Sergeant Flynn had been sent out with this small detachment to patrol the beach to Hilongas, the next town south of Baybay, to find if he could get trace of Slicky Smith, a deserter from a colored regiment, a company of which had preceded "D" of the 31st in occupation of Baybay.

It seemed useless to proceed along the open beach, but there was no alternative, for the rugged mountains of the west coast dropped precipitately to the sea, with naught but a narrow margin of dense, tangled, tropical undergrowth between the high-angled slopes and the ribbon-like, sun-baked beach.

As for traversing the mountains farther inland, that was out of the question. Even the "Pulajanes" — the native outlaws, semi-political and semi-religious, who, banded together under crafty, fanatical leaders, kept large forces of our regular army in the field for several years — were unable to make headway in that rugged, impassable jumble of rocks and brush, inhabited only by flying and creeping things, save perhaps a troop of monkeys, and even they were nomads and came but transiently into those forbidden parts.

It surely seemed a forlorn hope that Flynn and his little party could meet with aught but failure, for Slicky Smith was known to

be far too clever to be found moving in the open. Since daylight they had toiled and broiled along that glittering beach, and now, though tired and footsore, they were bearing up with that dogged fortitude which has always characterized our American regular when duty was the incentive — just plain everyday duty. Kick and grumble they will at times, and always have, but then that's a soldier's prerogative, considered by the officers more a privilege than a fault.

"Say, Sergeant," said Rookie Schultz, as the former was wading through the far side of a swift-flowing mountain stream which rippled through the sand and divided the beach where it entered the sea, "d'ye think us fellers kin keep this here thing up all day without a rest? I'd like to fill my canteen here, an' a rest an' a smoke wouldn't go bad if you'd give us a chance."

Flynn turned. Tireless himself, he had forgotten that some of these men were still scarcely more than boys and lacked his own early training on the western plains, keeping our Sioux and Apache wards within the boundaries of their reservations.

"All right, Rookie; set down an' smoke if you like, but don't let me ketch you, nor any o' the rest o' you men, a-loadin' up with any o' this here raw water. If you ain't got the savvy to fill your cans with decent biled water before you start out, nor brains enough to go light on it while you're on the hike, I reckon you'll have to go dry till we get back to the bunch."

The use of unsterilized water for drinking purposes in the tropics by the army is prohibited except in cases of the most dire necessity. Serious illness almost invariably follows violations of this rule.

Schultz was silenced, but the little party halted and sought the welcome shade under the fringe of vegetation on the inner edge of the beach, lounging down near the creek for the needed rest.

"Say, Rookie," said the sergeant, "are you sure shy o' water? If you are, you're a fool, and damn well you know it, but if you're really dry, you can take a swig from my can. Now, I warn you, go easy on it, for I'll be wantin' a drop myself before we get back. Hereafter, when you go out with me, let raw water alone, for I'm not hankering for the job o' packin' any fool recruit into camp on a litter. See?"

Thus was the law of the army administered in the field—crudely it would seem to the lay observer, but wisely and well, with the test of long experience.

Whenever they halted thus, one man was posted with rifle ready, so that the rest could throw aside all responsibility, and be secure from surprise during these brief periods of relaxation.

When at length the sun sank slowly down behind the ragged sky line of the Comote Islands, lying like the sentinels of an outpost on the western horizon, the short, tropical twilight came to an end just as the first faint rays of the moon grew visible in the east over the lofty tops of the Coast Range.

Then, with a signal to insure silence, Flynn halted his men and quietly motioned them around him, giving instructions for the night. "See here, men," said he, "this here Slicky is on this coast somewheres, an' it's up to us to get him. The bla'guard's too smart to get into the open in daylight, an' I didn't expect we'd see him to-day. He's probably several miles south of us yet, an' to my notion he ain't been this far north since the day he bagged poor Sandy, an' then he made his getaway toward Hilongas. From what the Lieutenant told me, I'll bet he's between this very spot an' Bulacan River. Now, if he is down here he's been a-layin' low all day, an' a-waitin' fer night to do his foragin'. Peters, you take the point an' keep near the brush. Load an' lock your gun an' be ready to shoot quick. Mitchell, Hunt an' McGuire, do the triangle patrol twenty yards behind Peters, an' you, Rookie, keep your eyes an' ears peeled on the rear. Don't mind me unless I whistle, for I'm goin' to scout ahead by myself. Don't any o' you fire unless you're sure it's Slicky, an' don't kill him unless he's tryin' to get the drop on you, for the Q. M.'s got ten yards o' hemp he's savin' fer the nigger."

Soldier talk, but each man understood, and cautiously the little party stole along, nothing to be heard but the crunch, crunch of the marching shoes through the pebbles and shells.

. . . . . .

Slicky Smith was what was known as a "bad nigger." He'd been a source of trouble to the officers ever since the first day of his enlistment in the 42nd. Rumor had it that before he acquired the name of Smith, he'd been a bang-up, crack-a-jack First Ser-

geant in the 10th Cavalry, but that "vino," that deadly Philippine distillation of the nipa plant, had been his downfall — with a woman in the bargain.

Nobody knew for sure, and his descriptive card did not seem to find a duplicate in the Surgeon-General's office, but serve before somewhere Smith surely had, for his drill and guard duty he could perform without a flaw. He was easily the best shot in the regiment with the rifle, and with the revolver he was the only man who had ever approached the regimental record of Lieutenant Milton.

It was only by chance that his pistol ability was discovered. The company commander had made him a trumpeter after little Dawkins was killed in the fight at Macabat Pass, and Smith had been ordered out with the other trumpeters for revolver practice. With scarcely an effort, and wholly without previous practice, Slicky had run up a score only two points behind that of young Milton, whose 287 at Sea Girt the year before had won the gold medal in the National Match.

It isn't known just why he was dubbed "Slicky," but perhaps it was due to the smooth way in which he lied himself out of serious trouble. He knew just how far he could carry his mischief without going beyond the pale of the regulations, and on two or three occasions had established a doubtful alibi, when he was strongly suspected of being at the bottom of several mysterious thefts.

"Slicky" had gone from bad to worse since the regiment had been in the Islands. He got drunk when no others could obtain the wherewithal. He had double the amount of his pay long after every other man was broke, and at that he never gambled, for not a man in the regiment would wager a *centavo* in the same room with him.

Friends he had none. Ostracized by all, but feared and hated by many, he went about his duty sullenly, muttering curses on officers and comrades alike, just keeping close enough within the law to prevent his being tried for insubordination by a general court-martial.

Slicky might have finished his enlistment and been sent to the States for discharge, had not Captain Langley joined from recruit-

ing duty and been assigned to "K" Company. At the very first inspection after Langley took command and found Slicky with a dirty kit, a look of mutual misunderstanding and dislike — downright hate on Slicky's part — flashed between those two.

"What's your name?" said the Captain. "Smith, sir," answered Slicky, sullenly. "Where did you serve before?" "Never served before, sir." "Didn't I see you at the Army Competition of 1902 at Fort Sheridan?" inquired Langley, with a searching look into Slicky's face. "No, sir, not me, sir. Never been in no other outfit 'cept this, sir," said Slicky, shifting from one foot to the other, but looking the Captain squarely in the eye.

"Well, my man, I think you're lying and I'm going to look up your record. In the meantime you must do better at inspections. Bring your kit to my quarters at ten o'clock, and see that it's in proper shape." Langley turned and continued down the line, Slicky's defiant, treacherous eyes following him with baleful meaning.

Slicky's Summary Court record started from that day. Langley seemed never to go anywhere without surprising him in the performance of some forbidden act.

The other men noticed with misgivings the increasing enmity between the two, and frequently the Captain was warned that Slicky "was a-goin' to do the Cap'n up."

Much apprehension was felt when Langley started down the coast for Baybay with "K" and Slicky.

The soldiers of our colored regiments are proverbially loyal to their officers, and the men of "K" Company were no exception to the rule, for they kept strict watch on Slicky, and from time to time warned the Captain, but Langley refused to believe that he was in personal danger. However, the men secretly followed when Langley walked out alone through the streets of the town, and in this way he was seldom without a hidden body-guard. Of course, no one knew just how it occurred, but when the First Sergeant entered the Captain's shack with the morning report book at the usual hour the morning after Slicky had come off guard he found poor Langley lying face upward at the side of his cot — foully murdered in cold blood while he slept.

A long kitchen knife was buried to the handle just under the

heart. The sightless eyes, staring up at the nipa roof, expressed, even in death, the soldierly determination and iron courage that characterized him.

Of course, Slicky was missing and hadn't been seen since the check roll call at "Taps," at 11 p. m., when he was reported by the non-commissioned officer in charge of quarters as asleep in his bunk. No one had seen or heard him get up, but gone he was, and with him rifle, belt and ninety rounds of service ammunition.

The dreadful news had scarcely been whispered round the barracks, when the First Sergeant, now in command, received a message from Deakyn, the Hilongas operator, that "Sandy" Clarke, the lineman from Baybay, had been found dead on the beach and that his six-shooter, bolo and pocket instrument were missing. "Wound in back looks like 30 Cal. Gov't," said the message.

Then, indeed, did murder, even lynching, enter into the souls of those loyal negro soldiers. Openly the threats were made that "Slicky" would never be tried by any white man's court, but that his own race would deal with him in a more fitting manner, for "Sandy" was a favorite with all who knew him, and a great sympathy went out to the wife and child, only waiting for the next Government launch to bring them down from Ormoc.

When this last news had been sent to headquarters at Camp Downes, Milton was sent at once in a swift sailing "barota" to take charge of the situation, and promptly reported that he wouldn't guarantee Smith a trial, should he be apprehended by the present garrison.

Thus it was that poor Langley's company was relieved and "D" of the 31st sent down from Palompon. For the sake of discipline this was no doubt the wisest course, but for all that everyone would have been glad to see those "K" Company fellows work out their own quality of mercy.

It was thought that Slicky would try to join "Old Faustino's" band of Pulajanes, but which way he had gone after killing poor Sandy could not be told, and Faustino had been in hiding in the mountains toward the south for over a month.

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The red was dying out of the western sky, and the yellow,

purple and other glorious after-tints were coloring the peaks of the Comotes, when Slicky Smith awoke with a start. What was it, he wondered, that caused him to take on that shivery, hair-raising sensation of impending danger? "Surely it is only nerves," said he to himself, but for all that he didn't feel just right. He peered out from his hiding place among the branches of the lofty royal palm, from which position, in the daytime, he could see up and down the beach for miles.

The light was growing dimmer now and he could scarcely see a hundred yards. Was there something moving toward him from the north? It was too dark for him to be sure, but he strained his eyes again and again and then finally concluded that it, too, was only nerves.

The animal instinct of an empty stomach now aroused him to the needs of the hour, and the thought of danger, of apprehension, vanished from his mind at the dictates of physical hunger. Since early morning he had fasted, lashed to the tree trunk by strong "bejuca" withes and well hidden from view by the luxuriant foliage of this stately giant.

From his haversack he then produced what remained of the little store of rations he had been able to secure from the company kitchen on that night when he evened up his grudge against the Captain. Meager, indeed, was the supply now, for ants had infested the corned beef, and nothing remained but crumbs of hard-tack and a greasy lump of salmon.

The sun had so sapped the moisture from his body that he'd drunk most of the water with which he had filled his canteen from the Bulacan River that very morning before daylight, and he cursed his folly for not selecting a cocoa-palm instead of the beautiful but useless royal.

It was quite dark now, except for the dim after-glow of the sunset, which still lingered above the ragged peaks of the Comotes, and what little light was given by the crescent moon.

Hark! What was that? It sounded like the crunching of the soldier shoe, for out here the natives are barefoot and make little noise in walking on the sand or pebbles. Surely he heard that step again, but no, merely the sound of his own teeth on the hard-tack, or just imagination — "just nerves," he told himself.

Hist! There it goes again! It *is* some one, and some one seeking *him,* too.

He stopped eating now, every sense on the alert. Should it be only one, why, he'll simply "fix" him like he did Sandy, the lineman. If there are two, or even three — well, he can probably "fix" them also, and he really needs the rations that they, of course, have with them. Thereupon his courage rose and his pulse went back to normal.

Now he can count the footsteps and distinguishes two. "Two! Is that all? What a 'cinch!'" He plans to let them pass and then silently follow and shoot from behind.

Suddenly, from a point almost beneath him, flared out the flash of a safety match and a soldier's face is seen. "White? Yes, surely it is a white man. It must be one of the 31st," he thinks. "But why down here? Why didn't they send out men from his own outfit, old 'K' Company?"

"Perhaps, after all, this was only a Signal Corps detachment patrolling the line to Hilongas. Yes, that must be it."

All in a flash this passes through his mind, and, drawing the long Colt he aimed at the red glow of a lighted cigarette, which had taken the place of the flaring match, and fired.

There was a sharp cry of pain, a muttered curse, an instant of quiet, then another shot from somewhere in the brush, a dull, sickening thud beneath the palm, and all was still.

'Twas Flynn spoke then. "Say, Rookie, you fool, are you hit? I hope you're not, but you sure deserve to be for trying to carry a lighted torch when you're huntin' men. I thought you had more sense. Keep quiet now till I see where I hit the bla'guard. Gee! Here he is, dead as a mackerel. Too bad he's cheated the necktie party. What? Rookie, my boy, are *you* hurt? Cheer up, Kiddy, you're a brave lad. Here, take a drink from this can. Where'd he get you, boy?"

. . . . . .

"McGuire, is that you? Say, Mac, I'm all in. It's got me where the Medico can't do no good. No, I can't speak any louder, Mac, so jest lean down a little closer, won't you? What's that you say, Mac? You'll tell my folks? Gosh! I'm sorry, but it's the truth, Mac, I ain't got no folks, and I only wanted to

be a soldier, an' — an' jest ast the Sergeant, won't you, Mac, to say when he reports, it was a soldier died an' not a 'rookie'?"

Tenderly they carried the poor lifeless body to a little improvised camp beneath the spreading branches of the palm, removing to a distance that other ghastly thing, the brutal features of which were rendered still more hideous in the faint light of the moon.

In turn the little party stood guard over the dead that night, and a great flood of bitterness welled up in the heart of each during the sad night vigil on that far off lonely coast. It is at times like this that the stern reality of the soldier's life is in greatest contrast to the popular conception as seen in the pomp and splendor of the recruiting posters. This is that other side so seldom revealed to the great reading public.

Next day, in a rough pine box, at the hour when the sun was again sinking down in its red and gold setting behind the Comotes, they laid poor Rookie away in a corner of the little old Spanish churchyard at Baybay, in the shade of the wide-spreading branches of a sturdy old mango tree, the quiet spot overlooking the blue waters of the straits.

When the sweet wailing notes of "Taps," the soldiers' last farewell to a fallen comrade, had died away among the crumbling stones, which marked the resting places of the old Spanish founders of the little town, the men of "D" Company marched sadly back to the barracks, mourning in their rough way the memory of Rookie Schultz; and even tears could be seen upon the bronzed and weather-beaten cheeks of some of those brave fellows.

MANILA, Sept. 20.

SEC. WAR, Washington.

Casualties week ending nineteenth; Schultz, Jacob, private "D", 31st, murdered; Smith, John, "K", 42nd, killed resisting arrest for murder and desertion.

STONE, *Maj. Gen. Commanding.*

Such was the official story of the tragic death of Rookie Schultz, as summed up in the weekly cable report of casualties to the War Department, which found its way into the obscure corner of an inside page of the half dozen papers that publish army news.